

"THE WAYS THINGS LOOK NOW

‡ THE WAR ‡

WILL SOON BE OVER..."

**The Civil War Correspondence of
Quartermaster Edmund Townsend**

June 8, 1864 - January 3, 1865

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT QUARTERMASTER

**THE HARD-DRINKING, QUARRELSOME QUARTERMASTER
OF THE 3RD DELAWARE
TOLERATED HIS LAST SIX MONTHS OF DUTY BY
GRUMBLING TO HIS BROTHERS BACK HOME**

**Hardtack Books
all things civil war.**

‡ EDITED BY JEFFREY R. BIGGS ‡

During the summer and fall of 1864, Lieutenant Edmund Townsend, the regimental quartermaster of the 3^d Delaware, penned a series of letters to his brothers, Samuel and John Townsend, during the siege of Petersburg. His letters serve as a fascinating insight into the mind of an independent and somewhat cynical minded staff officer who had his share of scrapes with the army command. Lt. Townsend, considered middle-aged at the age of forty-five, rails in his letters about army politics and martinet generals. When not pining for his discharge, Townsend describes his experiences as a witness to the trench-like fighting along the Petersburg line, the City Point explosion and the 1864 presidential election. The following selections of letters date from Cold Harbor on June 8, 1864 until Townsend's discharge in January 1865.

IN THE WOODS, 8 MILES EAST OF RICHMOND

June 8, 1864

I find time this morning to send you a few lines. This the 6th day our regiment has been in front fighting every day. We have loss 2 officers killed dead Lt. Dorrell and the adjutant P.J. Pettyjohn. Our loss in killed or wounded and missing are about 40. Every inch of the ground is contested by men on both sides determined on victory or death. I go into the regiment from one to 3 times a day



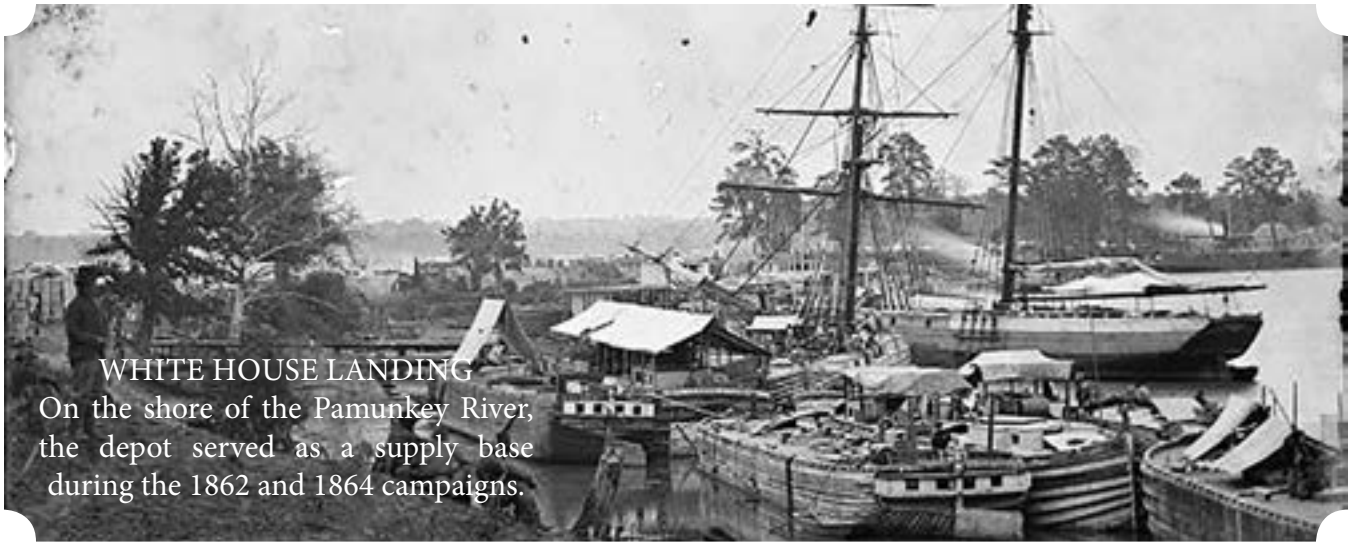
COLD HARBOR

Grant's general assault on the morning of June 3, 1864 was repulsed with a loss of 7,000 Union soldiers. Grant later said it was the only attack order which he regretted.

the balls whistled all around me. I hope to be spared but my chance is bad. I hope you will see after my family that they do not suffer. I left them in Israel's care when I was in Pope's campaign, but I now leave them in your care and I hope you will see that they do not suffer.

I have heard not one word from you or my family or any one since I left the Relay House. I am endeavoring to do my duty, to the best of my ability, and if I fall, I shall leave no stain on my children of a coward. I stayed in front, in the trenches yesterday for 3 hours encouraging the boys. I have a touch of the diarrhea, but not bad. I shall use white oak bark too if I get it. My health is generally good, sometimes I sleep in a shelter tent and some times on the ground in the rain. The weather is warm and rainy. The roads are bad with mud. Johnathon Johnson got one leg shot off and half of the other foot. Some of our men get cut in two with shells. The adjutant's head was blown off close to his body.

We get our supplies from the White House. We are in the 5th Corps under Gen. Warren, and the 4th Division and 2nd Brigade. I see Burnside often. I supposed we are advancing for our



WHITE HOUSE LANDING

On the shore of the Pamunkey River, the depot served as a supply base during the 1862 and 1864 campaigns.

pontoons are sent ahead. I wish we could get out in a clear country. For I am tired of woods fighting. The country that we are in now is a lot like Blackbird forest was 20 years ago, but the farmers are trying to raise all they can. The woman and children do the farming, for the men are all gone. We found plenty of cattle, sheep, hogs, corn and fodder. Back a few miles from here, I believe the rebels have plenty of everything, but their money is bad. I do not think we will get to Richmond in 40 days more unless we progress faster than we are doing. I will send you a letter every chance I have, if you get this letter tell my wife you heard from me for she may not get my letters. Tell Sarah and all of them that I am still alive yet.

CAMP IN THE FIELD IN FRONT OF PETERSBURG, VA

July 13, 1864

Yours of the 8th with check and stamps enclosed was received by me, all safe, on the 12th. I went down to City Point and signed the check over to Peter Cline, who is chief clerk in a very large sutler establishment, at \$125.00 for meals and board. He was our old sutler

clerk under Marsh so I got the cash without any trouble. It costs me about \$7.00 per week for my board and Clem's the (darky) and Thompson is with me also. He draws his rations but it is rough. He eats with me, and we use his ration in our mess. I live pretty well for I found that was the only thing that cure the diarrhea, was vegetables. I have had large presents from the Sanitary Commissioner, John Toner, who lives cheap. He has no money and I find he has a very soft and hungry disposition and uses it. He may be better when he gets money. I am getting a long as well as I could expect.

We have nothing new except what you see in the newspapers. We get the *Inquirer* and *Herald* about the 2nd day from the press, so we here know how things are going on. I see the papers that the rebs are making good progress in Maryland. I hope they will be cut off and all captured. Our 6th Corps has

A VIEW FROM THE FRONT

Lieutenant Edmund Townsend's letters to his brothers back home in Delaware provide an intimate look into the conflicted motives of a middle-aged man serving as the quartermaster of the 3rd Delaware.





CITY POINT RAILROAD DEPOT
 One of the most active supply depots in the Eastern Theatre, the depot at City Point supplied the Army of the Potomac for the nine-month long siege of Petersburg. City Point was the headquarters of Ulysses S. Grant from July 1864 to April 1865.

cause. We turned in 50 wagons to be used somewhere else. The railroad from City Point brings everything up. It runs our stuff within two miles of Petersburg. It runs close to my tent. We have two locomotives and one of them is used part of the time for a gravel train. Our men had to move one track of iron 3 ½ inches to get the right width. We have a splendid road with nearly all new yellow pine cross ties. We have a 100 men working

close to where I am camped. They are heaving wharf logs and cross ties out of this yellow pine; it is splendid wood. The green chips burn like turpentine. I have saw more beautiful timber in VA then I ever did before.

Some pine trees from 80 to 100 feet high as straight as a ramrod and some of them four feet across the stump and also some very fine white oak in the neighborhood of the White House and on our march the land is of a very fine quality of soil and not in very bad condition. I see in the papers that the Rebels are committing some depredations in Maryland. In the name of God how could our men grumble at that? For we do not leave a house but what is burnt or gutted. The out houses are

gone up to assist them a little in their raid. They will have a hot time if they get back to Richmond. You can here all about it before my letter reaches you. So that will not be news to you.



I got a letter from my wife yesterday. She is boarding at my old boarding place near the Relay House which will be much better than keeping house and far cheaper for me. She is better satisfied. They are

Union Boarders at the house. Several officers and their wives board at the same house. There is only 4 rooms taken with the one I have, for the boarders are only table boarders. She has a pleasant place. I see that the Rebels are getting close

to her, but I do not feel uneasy, nor shall I until I actually hear that they have got there. I see by the papers that Gen. E. B. Tyler was taken prisoner. I hope they will keep him for one of the last exchanges. He is a petty tyrant. Our boys are all glad he was captured if the rest had been safe.

The Delaware Cavalry are all dismounted, they belong to the 6th Corps. They was stopped at City Point and did not go with the corps. I saw some of them yesterday. Richard Webb died the other day with chronic diarrhea. He is in the cavalry. He was a great pet of our old man's while he lived in Odessa, him and your boy use to come and see me often when they had a chance.

Bill Bostick had to go back to the regiment and five more of our drivers. We reduced the wagon train which was the


I SEE IN THE PAPERS THE

REBELS ARE
COMMITTING DEPREDATIONS IN MARYLAND
IN THE NAME OF GOD HOW CAN
OUR MEN GRUMBLE AT THAT?

often stripped for boards to fix tents and the balance burnt to cook with. The fields of wheat, corn and oats that was growing fine when we came over here are now deserts of dust and not vegetation on them, no fences. You can start on horseback and ride for 20 miles and all you have to contend with is upland ditches or briars and thick bushes. For the woods has all been burnt through since we came here and the clover fields take fire and run all over. For what little clover is left is tramped down and became as dry chaff, in fact the men will not know where they ever lived and as you get in three miles of the army you see nothing but rifle pits and breastworks and then you come near the line of forts. They are very high and large and have large ditches running from one to the other. For a distance of ten miles as our men take them they change the front of them.

Of course to see us you would think strange if I tell you that our men in advancing go out in front of the trenches, some 200 yards, and in five minutes if they are not shot, will take their bayonet and tin blade, and dig a hole and throw the dirt in front large enough to lay in and load. They lay in them holes all day and load and fire at each other. In some cases the rebels and our men get so close to each other at night they find their holes close together and lay and talk to each other and not fire all day. Our men will advance a line of men, called skirmishers, they have very dangerous work and the main line will come close to them and get all the fence rails and logs they can. And in 20 minutes will have breastworks thrown up for a mile in length. They dig a ditch and throw the dirt in front. There is a lot of men with shovels and picks that advance as the line advance. In some cases these line of ditches are very close together for sometimes our men can not advance very far. If you could come down and go with me someday, and see the work our men have done you could hardly believe your eyes.

Our lines in front of our Brigade have not been advanced

for several days. Burnside is driving up every night. He is making about 5,000 baskets about the size of a barrel with the bottom out. They are made of sticks and thick as your wrist and some with width as thick as your fingers. They are to set up and be filled with dirt instead of sand bags or logs. We have everything that the art of man can devise in this contest. I must close. Write to me soon and let me know how James are all the rest are. My respects to all my friends.

CAMP IN THE FIELD, VA

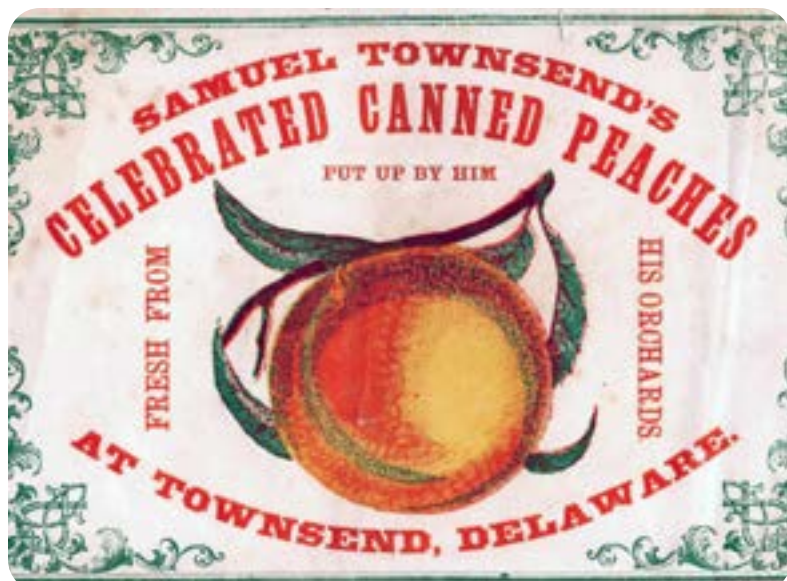
August 3, 1864

I have not received any letter from you since the one you sent me the check in as I remember of. I received a letter from James. We lay in the same place, our regiment has been moved over to the left. You see a great account

CONSTRUCTING GABIONS

The use of the gabion dates back to the times of the Roman armies and were used extensively as fortifications during the Civil War. Soldiers used whatever materials were available including sticks and brush. The term in Italian means "big cage."





THE PEACH KING OF DELAWARE

Samuel Townsend, the eldest brother of the family, was the patriarch of the family and made a small fortune in the Delaware peach business during the war and afterwards. Edmund Townsend's interest in the peach crop is evident in his letters.

about blowing up a fort. We gained nothing by the process. We lost more in that affair than our enemies did. We are gaining very slow, if any. I am getting very low spirited about our advance. I see the *New York Herald* is down on old Abe if General Grant fails. McClellan will have to take the hold of the army for you cannot find a man but what will tell you that McClellan ought to have a command. Politics is beginning to take a sharp course in the army. I find that the abolitionists have the small end of the road. The soldiers are getting tired of the fighting for negros. The negros ran away after they rushed into the fort and that caused panic and our boys lost all they gained.

I hope you will have a good crop of peaches. Mr. [] is here with me he sent and bought a mellon for \$1.00 and 12 cans of peaches \$10.00. The peaches sell at retail for \$12.00. We had one of your 3 lb cans yesterday. I took the top off of it and after we eat the peaches I made a bucket of out it boil dried fruit.

I am very well in health. I have lost 22 lbs. I have nothing new except the report that the pay master has come down to pay us off. I hope he has for I have not been paid since January 1st. I have 7 months pay due me. I think we will be paid soon.

THE SPECTER OF GEORGE MCCLELLAN

George Brinton McClellan's footprint on the Army of the Potomac was still evident in the 1864 presidential campaign. Townsend's political viewpoints expressed in his letters was a typical one of a border state War Democrat.

I go up to our regiment nearly every day. I found one of the Brotten boys in the 4th Delaware. He came up and spoke to me. Nick and Felix Barlow are about being sent home as pledged out. They are not of use here. Bostic looks fat as a hog. Capt. McKay is here at my tent also. He has been examined and found incompetent for a Lt. Colonel and has been discharged. I pity him for his one of our bravest ment and the oldest captain in the regiment. He was entitled to have been promoted but he is now after all his hard fighting been discharged. I wish they would call me before a board. I would not answer a word. I wish I was out of service but I have less then 6 months to serve. I must close. Give my respects to your wife and all your family. Tell James I got his letter. I received one from John and one from Sarah Ann Townsend last week. I see in the paper that Wilmore arrested a pretty round of chaps at Hare's Corner. I hope you and John





THE CITY POINT EXPLOSION, AUGUST 9, 1864

The tremendous explosion aboard an ammunition ship, which occurred on the wharf at City Point on August 9, 1864, reportedly killed at least fifty individuals including thirty-two African American laborers. The gunpowder ignited the projectiles and caused destruction within a quarter-mile radius. After the war it was revealed that Confederate saboteurs had planted a bomb.

will escape the wrath of the woolly heads for I have concluded that this war is to benefit the negroes. No more.

Ps: Since I wrote this letter today I have just received your of the 31st. The old farm seems to be very troublesome. If I was out of the service I would see if they could sell it every day or two. I wish you would get a lawyer and see to it for me. It take good care of my self and by the use of red oak and sweet gum bark tea, made a soup and whiskey added to it I have got pretty well again.

CAMP NEAR CITY POINT, VA

August 9, 1864

I set down in my tent this morning to write you a letter giving you an account of one of the greatest accidents our government has met with during this campaign. I suppose you will see it in the newspapers before this reaches you, but I will give you the particulars.

You see on the map just how City Point is situated. Well, the government has built a wharf at least 150 yards long at a great cost and have built a warehouse about 100 yards long on the wharf and at least 50 feet wide and 12 or 15 feet to the roof and had it stored full of quartermaster and commissary stores. The railroad runs in the rear of the warehouse and then a wagon road outside of it and then crosses a row of

buildings and tents, Adams Express post office, nurse offices, ice cream office, lemonade, soda fountains and some very large sutler tents and an old building with a chimney at least 20 feet high. In the rear of these establishments is a space varying from 30 to 50 feet and a hill nearly perpendicular of at least 40 feet high. Now that you have the outlines of the lower street so you can fix your mind.

Well, it appears that the war has taken away the fear of danger and some men do as they choose. Today about 11 o'clock, while the men were either loading or unloading a schooner with ammunition of all kinds consisting of large and small shells, cartridges and other combustibles with a very large amount of some kind of stalk in the center of the warehouse, and a large barge between the schooner and wharf with a large amount of muskets and accoutrements and from appearances at least 1,000 saddles &

equipment of all kind in here. By some unknown cause the schooner blew up and in 5 seconds the whole magazine blew up which sounded to me, at a distance of 10 miles for I was up in front, like a large powder mill. I came down to my tent about 3 o'clock and Thompson had sent a man down on one of my horses to learn the results. He came back in about 20 minutes after I got to my tent and stated that Peter Cline, our old sutler, was badly wounded. I proposed to John Toner and some other officers to go down. We went and found everything quiet and I had a fair chance to view the ruins of which I am going to give you an idea of.

The first thing I saw was that the negro town of tents up on the flat ground on top of the hill was all blown to atoms. I rode to the top of the hill and took

another look there I saw a roof gable over the top of the chimney with a large anchor laying over towards the hill. The anchor in passing over the chimney took off one side of it for four feet down and the other end of the gable was across towards the boat. I saw a piece of the barge with 4 of the 1st futtocks and the plank still fastened to it with one futtock all blown out. This piece of the large barge layed about 100 yards from where the boat layed and up on the flat ground after raising the hill of 40 feet. At least 50 or 60 yards from the top of the hill the whole ground was strewn with muskets broke and bent in all manner of shapes and gun bayonets were blown threw a 7-inch white oak futtock and the barrel was half way through the log also. One piece of wharf log 12 x 15 feet long 12 x 12 was thrown 50 yards further up. The whole ground was covered with shot and shell and missiles of all kind. The saddles & accoutrements were torn up and covered the whole side at least for 1/8 of an acre. The warehouses looked like some of the Rebel barns where we have burnt, but the flames were soon extinguished by the fire engines from the hospitals and steamboats.

The whole is a mass of ruins. I hitched my horse and walked around. I saw such queer looking lumber all piled up on the railroad that I stopped and looked at it and saw that it was the barge torn up and thrown through the house. The Adams Express Building was taken with a leave of absence. The tents

were knocked down like cedar bush in a sleet storm. Some were killed dead, some a leg of, some burnt, some torn up like as if they had passed through a wheat machine. My friend Cline was stunned and struck in the back by a falling missile and hurt pretty bad. He was the only one in the large tent that was hurt. The end stood towards the concussion passed thought it but tore the tent down. They told me just before

sundown that their was about 100 men killed and wounded and about 80 of them negroes. Some of the officers said it was another emancipation act like the fort affair.



I heard that the loss would be \$300,000. The men said that shot and shell rained for awhile. The shells in many instances bursting in wide confusion. I heard that about 20 horses were killed. If it had happened yesterday as the cavalry was going onboard of vessels and the mail boat leaving, I suppose it would have killed 500 men and a large amount of horses. The train of cars was not in front of it and was saved.

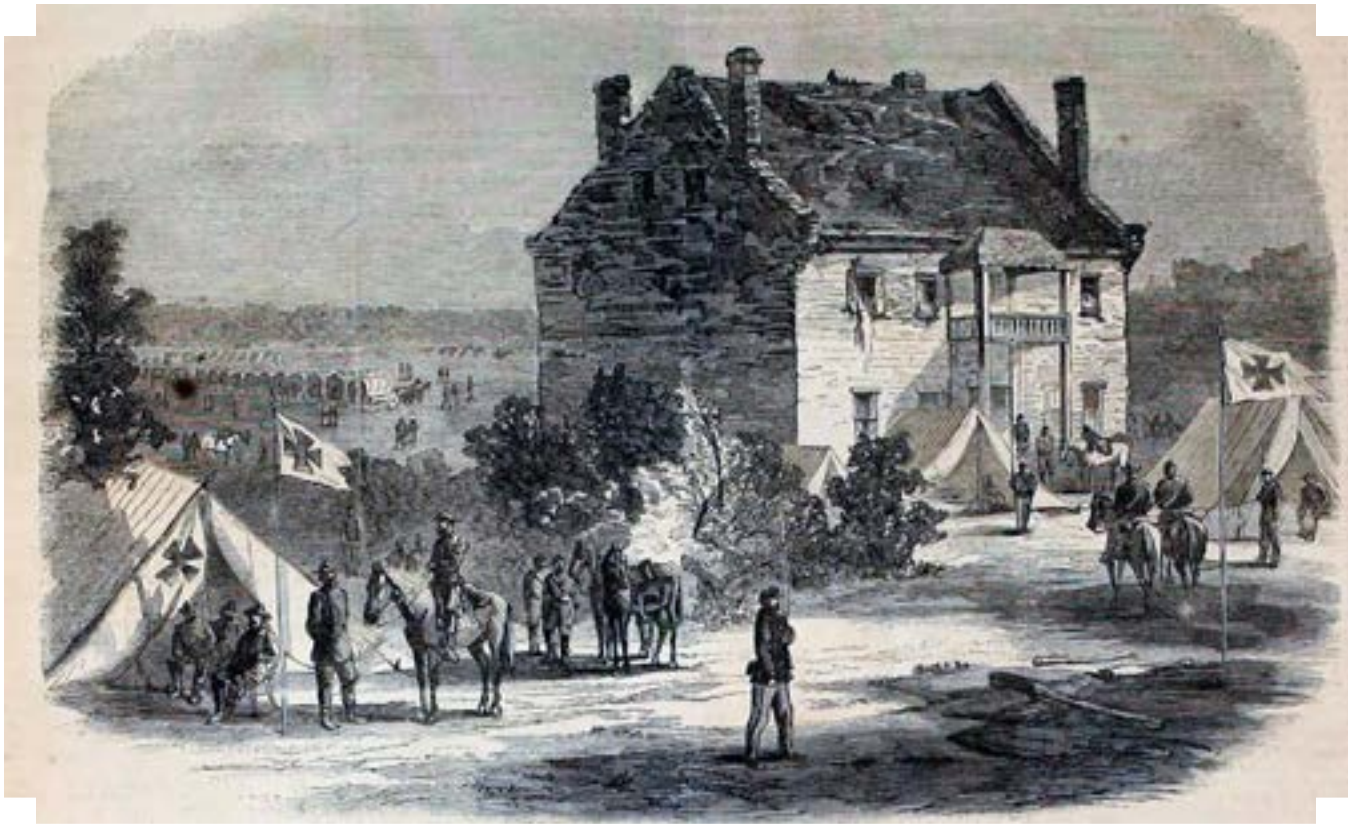
Nothing else new. When you commence canning peaches, send me 2 cans directed to Peter Cline in care of A.A. McGaffery, City Point, VA, Sutler.

CAMP NEAR CITY POINT, VA

August 22, 1864

I set down this morning to write you a letter. I sent you a letter giving you an account of the great explosion at the City

 **I WISH THEY WOULD** 
CALL ME BEFORE A BOARD
I WOULD NOT ANSWER A WORD
I WISH I WAS OUT OF SERVICE
BUT I HAVE LESS THEN 6 MONTHS



THE BATTLE OF GLOBE TAVERN

After the failure of the Mine Assault, an attempt was made in mid-August to extend the Federal line to the west and to disrupt Confederate communications with Petersburg. The result was a series of battles known as Globe Tavern and Weldon Railroad. In four days of fighting, the Federals lost 1,303 killed and wounded and 3,152 in missing. The Confederates lost 1,200 killed and wounded and 419 missing.

Point and I had sent you a letter a short time before that one, and have not received an answer to either of them. I should like to know if you get my letters and if you got this one. I received a letter from my son James a short time ago. He said you was very busy with your peaches. I started to write a few days ago but wanted to see how we would come out. The 5th Corps advanced on our left last Wednesday. They went out to the Weldon Railroad and had a hand to hand fight with the rebels (*ed., Battle of Globe Tavern or 2nd Weldon R.R, 18 - 21 Aug. '64*). Our men drove them a mile beyond the railroad and tore up 10 miles of it. Our men threw up strong earthworks along the railroad and on Friday night had a hard fight and repulsed the rebels. They made the inner line of works strong and got the cannon all in position and on Saturday night leveled down the outer works and fell back to the works near the railroad. The rebels charged our works yesterday morning. The fight was just over as we go up there for its 15 miles from my camp to the regiment.

The roads are very bad for it rained all last week here. The ground is quick-sandy. The horses mire as we ride along.

They post 12 horses instead of 6 to the cannon. Our men have the road now and can hold it. We will now swing around Petersburg. We hold one unbroken line from within 7 miles of Richmond near Fair Oaks down across a point of land of which we are digging a ship canal to cut off Fort Darling. The canal is nearly dug. We then cross the James River on pontoons and come across Bermuda Hundred within 2 miles of Petersburg and there cross the Appomattox River in pontoons and now have extended our lines to breastworks to the Weldon Road and down the road 10 miles and then around in our rear to the James River.

Our lines of works are over 40 miles long. You cannot form any idea of the work our men are doing. The whole country is dug up in ditches and cut up in roads. The houses as fast as they are vacated are torn down by the soldiers to make floors in their tent. Houses that cost \$3,000 are torn down in about a week by the men. The houses that are occupied are protected



CITY POINT HOSPITAL

Known as the Depot Field Hospital, it was one of seven hospitals which served Federal troops near Petersburg. The Depot Hospital could serve up to 10,000 patients. Twelve hundred tents, supplemented by ninety log barracks in the winter, comprised the compound, which included laundries, dispensaries, regular and special diet kitchens, dining halls, offices and other structures.

and taken care of. I saw some splendid houses yesterday, they are occupied except for a few and them are used for hospitals.

I stopped at the hospital yesterday to see some of our men. We only lost one man killed and 6 or 8 wounded. Our regiment captured a stand of colors and about 15 prisoners yesterday morning. The 4th Delaware behaved very bad in these last fights, but I do not want it known from me until we get out. They run and straggled so bad that their officers could not keep them in any kind of order.

I rode up to the field hospital which was 500 yards in the rear of our lines. The rebels shot a private through the head and killed him while he was leaning against a tree talking to a doctor, and killed a horse also close by the shell. They had the wounded men in an old outhouse close to where the man was shot about 10 feet from the tree. I stayed there about $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour. I went back in the woods where the cooks of our regiment were. I fed my horse [and] ate my dinner laid down and took a nap. I got up about two o'clock, took a drink of

whisky, got on old Dan and lunged him out in front for it was sometimes up to his belly. I road clear out to our works. The firing had ceased. I had a fair view of the scenery of the morning fight. Our men were busy caring of the wounded rebels, they left the dead laying until more time. Our men opened on them with grape and cannister at about 100 yards range. They slayed them like shooting in a flock of black birds. I looked at piles of legs and hands and arms laying at the hospital. The doctors were bloody just like butchers, some all over the face and head. Our regiment has not been paid of yet, we are all bad off for money and cloth.

I wrote to John Townsend to see Blackburn in Wilmington and get a pair of pants made for me for he has my measure. I wrote to him what kind to make me. If you go up to Wilmington see him, his name is William Blackburn. He is above G. McCalls. He has my measure. I want a coat and pants just the size of the ones

he made me last December and just like them. I do not want a vest. I want the pants corded with blue cloth cord instead of gold lace. That is the order now. I wrote to Blackburn to make the pants larger than the old ones but if he makes them same size and make them broad and line them as the others were. I have sent by Mr. Lithicum for the clothes but I don't know whether he will get them or not, if they are not started yet and you can get them, send them to me by Adams Express and write me a letter to look out for them. Mark on the card Peter Cline, in care of A.A. McGaffey, sutler at City Point, VA and I will get them. I told John to send the pants by mail to Thompson but you send them as stated and if we don't get any more money this year I shall want to get \$30 more pretty soon.

I am well tell James & your brother.

CAMP IN THE FIELD

September 4, 1864

Yours of the 30th August was received yesterday and also one from John 31st August. You said you were all well except my son James and that he had a chill. If the gets the chills and you cannot stop them, send him up to his aunt's for summertime, a change of water will cure it. I got a letter from James last week, he says you have the renowned F. Vandergrift in your employ. I don't want him to meddle with James in any way shape or form, for I don't look on him as a fit subject for anything.

I have been sick and consigned to my tent for 3 or 4 days last week I had the chronic diarrhea. I am well of it but have biles on me now, which is very painful but not dangerous. I made a strong syrup out of red oak bark and sweet gum, and took $\frac{1}{4}$ whisky to it and kept taking a little at a time all day and all night. It cured me in 3 or 4 days. Other men that had it went to the hospital and was sick a long time.

I have not received a letter from you before this one since July. I have written three letters to you. I hope you have seen that damned liar in Wilmington about my clothes. I gave

him hell last week in a letter. He has had my order since last April when he made that last clothes. I paid him in advance and he was three months making me a coat with all the hurrying my wife could do. Mr. Lithicum went to Wilmington on business [and] on the 9th of August he called for the coat and pants. Blackburn said he had not made them yet, but would make and forward them the next week. I wrote to him that I had heard enough damned lies. I now wanted the clothes. I am very bad off for pants and my coat is quite ragged only as I mend my clothes myself. I wrote to him to send then in Peter Cline's name in care of A. McGaffey, sutler at City Point, VA and I will be sure to get them, and also send me a letter with the Adams Express receipt in it.

John wrote to me that he heard that Nick Barlow was wounded in the head very bad. I saw him in about an hour after the fight. The skin was not broke on his forehead nor not even bruised. He got a light tap on the head with a piece of shell or a piece of flying timber. It did not knock him down or more than that. Some says that he

fell down afterward, he is not hurt much. We lost one man named James Curry from Sussex County.

We have

5 or 6 wounded and 7 or 8 captured. We took two stands of colors and licked the rebels like hell. They say the Delaware soldiers fight like wasps. They stand off from our boys now.

We got a motley set of recruits sent

**OUR MEN OPENED ON THEM
WITH GRAPE AND CANNISTER
AT ABOUT 100 YARDS RANGE
THEY SLAYED THEM LIKE
SHOOTING IN A FLOCK OF BLACKBIRDS**



GOVERNOR WILLIAM CANNON

One of the wealthiest Delawareans of his time, Governor William Cannon, left the Democrat Party to gain the governorship of Delaware under the banner of the Union-Republican Party.

to us last week, about 75. Out of them about 60 will be fit for duty. The average of reinforcement comes in at about 3000 per day and we lose 1000 going out of service and other ways. We had a dispatch yesterday that Atlanta has been captured by Sherman. The way things look now the war will soon be over. General McClellan will take well with the army. He will get 2/3 of our regiment. Governor Cannon could not get 25 votes in our regiment. Again he never sends any one to look after the Delaware soldiers. Every other state has its agents going around looking after the wounded men and getting them to their homes while our wounded in Delaware regiments are scattered from Maine to Ohio, some we hear from were sent to Connecticut. I saw that Delaware & Maryland cast their votes for [Thomas] Seymour. I [unintelligible] the abolitionists and show them that the Copperheads in the Democratic Party only amount to 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ of Union Democrats. I tell them that Old Abe has about one half wolleys and if Fremont cuts off that tail, the old man will be knocked kneed by the 5th of November. John Toner is a violent abolitionist as far as the army is concerned but his practice is different [*ed. Toner was the QM of the 4th DE*]. Him and I had a sharp quarrel yesterday, but we made up again. He swells up like a gas bag and then bursts. He came around and said that I could out

argue him, but he was a fool to get mad.

If you send me a box of canned peaches direct them to my name in care of A.A. McGaffey, City Point, VA and write me a letter and I will look out for them. Tell James that I have got well again. I feel as well in health as I ever did in my life. Give my respects to all the folk I am acquainted with at your place.

Ps: We are in the 3rd Brigade 2nd Division 5th Corps but all letters go now to corps headquarters and are sent from to the regiment. We have not been paid for 8 months and I don't know that we will get any more by this year.

CAMP IN THE FIELD

September 10, 1864

Yours of the 5th and one from James of the same date was received on the evening of the 9th. I am glad to say that I have got entirely well again and feel as well in health as I could desire. I had a very large bile on my thigh, but it is nearly well also. I received a letter from you the other day. I answered it. We have not been paid off yet, but still expect to be sometime this fall.

John wrote to me that I had not asked him to see my clothes. I wrote to him that he had forgot, but I did and wrote to me that he was thrashing but would attend to it for me as soon as he went up to Wilmington. I guess I shall get the clothes now sometime. James says that he has got well again. I am glad to hear it, for I am uneasy about him. You say also that my wife is visiting around. I am glad to hear from her, for I did not know exactly where she was at. I hope you have

done well with your peaches. I think that I shall now be able to stand my time out.

I do not expect to get home to vote. McClellan would have done better if he had some Southern man to run with him. I hope he will be elected. He will get a very large army vote. You said that you was a going out west but did not state what for so I concluded that you were going on a secret mission. You did not have to pay much at last for the darkey & Irishman. They only cost \$312.50 at last. I hope this war would soon be ended. Our new railroad now runs up to the Weldon. I guess that we are making preparations to stay all winter.

I must close. Send me a check for \$30.00 and some stamps before you go west. Tell James I got his letter also. No more.

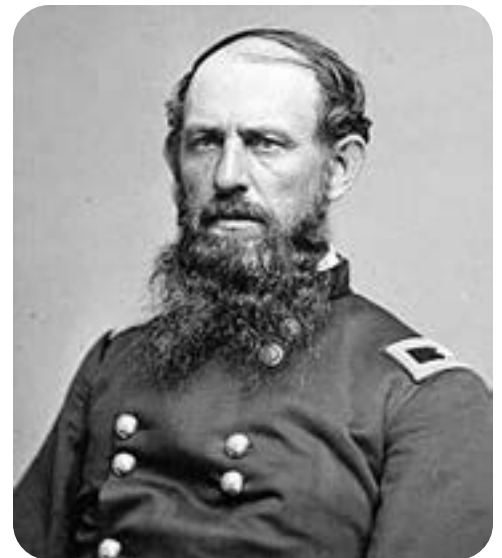
CAMP NEAR WELDON RAILROAD, VA

October 1, 1864

I got back here on the 28th of September at 10 o'clock p.m. We had to pack up for a move soon after I got back. A hard fight commenced on our lines as I passed along on my way up here. The wagons were all packed up for a march that next morning and are still standing ready. I put up one tent in the afternoon and Toner and all of us stayed in it this morning. I put up my private tent and have got a chance to write. It is raining very hard at this time and our army moved out yesterday for the Danville Road. The fight is progressing in our favor. I am acting Brigade Q.M. but shall not continue any longer than I can get out of it. I found everything right when I got back.

Bill Bostick is well and hearty. He gave me \$100.00 to keep for him for a while. I got to the Relay House Saturday night and on Sunday morning went with Captain [unintelligible], 1st Eastern Shore Volunteers, up to Fort Dix. I met General Tyler on the porch at Relay House, he turned his back on me. So I am sure he was mad. I returned to the boarding house and stayed on Monday morning. I went with my valise and took [unintelligible] along down and bought my ticket and was standing on the platform. General Tyler sent the provost marshal and arrested me. I went across to the office. I showed my pass alright. He then said that I had said that he was afraid to go to the 3rd Delaware. I asked him for his authority. He went and asked one or two men and I found that he could not prove it. He then came near to me as I was standing along side of the office all the time arresting me. He called me a damned liar – a scoundrel and everything he could think of and wound up by saying that he would give me all the trouble he could and ordered the provost marshal to put me in the fort, which was from 9 until 4 o'clock. He then ordered me

down and after forbidding me to ever come in his department again then ordered me on to my regiment. I sent up for my wife, she came down and his spies watched me all the time. I wrote a letter for my wife to take to General Lockwood. He saw that she was going into Baltimore. He thought he had better get clear of me. I told her to go on and state the case and tell that I had gone on. I reported him in Washington. They told me to prefer charges against him. I shall make them out as soon as I can stop. He may prefer charges against me. I have good witnesses. I shall give him some trouble I did not commit myself. The officers said to me that I had him bad and he knew it. I shall make one charge of false imprisonment, one conduct unbecoming an officer and gentleman and one or two more. I will



GENERAL ERASTUS TYLER

A successful businessman before the war, Erastus Barnard Tyler was commissioned a colonel of an Ohio regiment; he was discharged from the army as a Major General. Townsend's feud with Tyler dates back earlier in the war and landed him in Fort McHenry. The origin of the feud remains unknown.



THE 1864 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

In a remarkable example of an election held under duress, President Lincoln won reelection in a landslide largely due to Sherman's successful capture of Atlanta in early September. Townsend's prediction of a McClellan victory was unfounded.

let you know how I came out.

I got your letter and the check and stamps. My clothes came, but I have not heard from the box yet. I shall send the clothes back for I do not want them now. I have old clothes enough to last me through my time out. Tell James that I am well and tell John about my trouble with General Tyler for I shall not have time to write to him for a while. Tell all the folk that I am well. This great fight is progressing steady. I shall look out for myself.

CAMP NEAR WELDON RAILROAD, VA

October 27, 1864

Your very exceptional letter of the 21st was received today and I hasten to answer it because we are making preparations for a move somewhere but God only knows where for it appears to me

that every place I go I see forts of dirt about the size of a block of houses in a city. Thompson does all my writing. I either send over to the news office and get a lot of papers and read all day or get on my horse and ride around to the different works. We have horse racing here nearly every day. I never go. A man got thrown and killed on Saturday. I guess it has broke racing.

I think we will swing around toward Wilmington, NC. I don't think we will get home to vote. If we do there is a good many Democrats in our regiment although they do not let on, all that the Democrats have to do is to rag on them and use a little whiskey. Toner is a violent abolitionist. He was inclined to bare down on me some time back, but I gave him a sharp dig. I told him I should join the know-nothing party when I went home, I should oppose letting Irishmen vote. Someone told Dr. Grimshaw how that John and me

had a little quarrel. Grimes was in a very fine humor when I went out. Toner and me were together. Grimes told Toner that I served him right. He said to John Toner that N.B. Smithers could not get his vote. I have my health good and am getting a long as well as I could expect. I have three months more to serve from tomorrow. I have not got your letter that you spoke of.

I preferred charges against General Tyler. I have not heard from them yet. Lt. Walls has just been in my tent, his is Chief of the Pioneers. He says that orders has come to pack up in the morning to start. I was glad to hear from Sarah and the rest of the girls. As to the old farm, I cannot do anything now but I shall look after things when I get home. Let me know how things stand when you write. As soon as we get settled again I will let you know how I am. Give my respects to your wife and all the folks. Keep any eye on my son James that he does not get in bad company. I get a letter from him once in a while. I must close for the bustle has commenced. I will go out to our regiment and see if I can do anything for them.

CAMP NEAR WELDON RAILROAD, VA

November 14, 1864

I now find time to write to you to give you some idea of the soldier's life. I saw you in Wilmington on Tuesday and gave you a history of my trip to Baltimore and back on Monday. I had good luck. I got my money and signed all necessary papers. Well, after running up and down Market Street five or six times and to Front and Tatnall from Ninth and Walnut, I finally got rations for all the men we had and they marched down to the cars. I waited at 9th and Walnut for about an hour to send stragglers. I went down to the depot and found some of our regiment in the cars and some of them taking a fist fight with some of the 1st Delaware. We got all on board we could and started about 2 o'clock and left some officers to bring on stragglers. We had all laid in a fair share of the one thing needful, cold whiskey. We ran very slow. Stopped often and laid still a long time at each place and made our run to Baltimore in 13 hours, which brought 3 o'clock am. We

**THE WAY THINGS LOOK KNOW
THE WAR WILL SOON BE OVER
GENERAL MCCLELLAN WILL TAKE WELL
WITH THE ARMY
HE WILL GET 2/3 OF OUR REGIMENT**

had plenty time to send out and have our canteens filled with water for we did not need any more whiskey than we had with us. Colonel Grimshaw had rather more than his share at one time but a short nap soon brought him alright. When we got to Baltimore the men

were all marched up to the Soldier's Rest near the Camden Station depot. Our regiment, by my intrigue and quickness of thought, got the lead and got their first and got the best place for their men. Major Bailey, Quartermaster Houston and Captain Butler and myself walked down to the [unintelligible] after we had flanked Major Gist at an oyster house by getting first and getting better seats. We found Colonel Grimshaw and staff sitting back in the office with their feet up on chairs. We said nothing only spoke and smiled. We went and took a room with 2 beds in it and turned in at 4 o'clock and slept till 7 o'clock when we came down Colonel Grimshaw said that he was a fool for not going to bed. After breakfast we went and got transportation. Bailey ordered Captain Joseph to march the men down to the wharf while him and I laid in some stores such as whiskey, cigars and tobacco and matches for our [unintelligible] was already packed waiting for us. His darkey had his and my darkey handle all our baggage also so we were alright. The 1st, 3rd and 4th regiments all went on board of the *City of Albany* at the Boston Wharf just below the Philadelphia depot. At 10 o'clock we were started and arrived at City Point next day at 11 o'clock

after a very pleasant passage. We slept very little that night until 3 o'clock for every fellow played his part. Some played cards, some danced, some sang, some played, some were drunk not many sober, some sea sick throwing up and some laughing. Well, after waiting at City Point until about 4 o'clock, after having a good dinner of oysters we started for the front and found our old camp at dusk on the 17th. I found that our camp had been moved up to the front, but I found my tent put up and my horses and everything alright. Yesterday I drew and issued clothes, camp & garrison equipment for all that needed them in our regiment, and knocked up the boxes and fixed up my bed and put a good floor in my tent. I bought a camp stove at City Point and when I got up Captain Eliot had drawn three stoves for me. He is the Brigade Quartermaster. I let Major Bailey have one, Dr. Houston one and Thompson the other. I have a good tent and stove in it. I have my bed and desk and all extra clothing in my tent.

The weather has rained every since we came back. Things looks like a move again, but I am ready. I have 6 mule teams and Bill Bostick to drive it for my baggage and Quartermaster stores and one wagon to take the officers baggage. So we are ready for a tramp at any time. I have kept very well and feed very kind.

I think I made a big mistake by buying that farm near Beltsville. I only have 2 months and 8 days more in the service. I shall try to make use of my time of that farm. I shall pitch into that from mind in earnest if everything works right. Tell Israel when you see him that I told you to say to him that I got back all right and I am well. Give my respects to your wife and her father and brother and sister and to Dr. Sharp. Say to them when they see me again I will be a citizen. I must close. The picket firing tonight sounds so many men in a woods chopping on old hollow logs. It is very dark and raining. No more, write to me soon and direct as before.

CAMP IN THE FIELD

January 1, 1865

Yours of the 27th was received this morning. I had heard that you were away from home, and also that the old farm was conferred to the last purchaser. John could have saved the sacrifice but he did not see fit to do it. Well let it go. I have lost everything of my own in the world by that farm. So I now start anew and I think I can make more money in one year - with the farm I bought for my wife and by have a little money left of hers - than I could have made on the old farm after 50 years of hard labor. I may be mistaken but I cannot see how if Israel had done as I asked him to do, that is to have sent me

a copy or the original pay rolls, that he has or ought to have I could have been home by Christmas, but I have to fight through. I wrote to John - what I wanted, but I suppose he told Israel to get the paper and send them to me. I wrote to Quartermaster to see Old Judd and get certain papers he wrote to Judd and Judd wrote back to him. He put Judd's letter in one he wrote to Mr. Stanton that he had done all he could and sent me Judd's letter. I got tired of fooling with him and Judd and John. [*ed. Major Henry B. Judd was detailed from the old army as superintendent of Volunteer Recruiting Service for the State of Delaware*]. I sent in my resignation yesterday, it came back in the evening on account of some informality of our Major. The Major will forward it again this morning. I stand a very good chance to get out this next week for all the commander in our brigade and division are acquainted with me and I have talked to them on the subject. I will either have it approved or have an order to go and be mustered out. I only have 28 days more to serve anyhow. My wife moved on the farm the 9th of December. James got home alright, he took his dogs. He has written to me three times since he got home. He is delighted with the place. I shall go to work at the Iron Mines as soon as I get home.

We had a small snowstorm here yesterday and last night. It is very cold this morning, but we all have log cabins or tents. I have two good wall tents. One for myself with a board floor in it and one for Thompson and my cook John Ferguson who is a drummer but has been with me since last spring. We have a cook stove in it. I have a small stove in my tent.

I live well and have nothing to do but I want to get home, we get all good army news, direct from the seat of war but the bad news we get from the

papers. We get the Richmond papers very often through the picket lines. We had a very merry Christmas here. Major Bailey has a log house built alongside my tent. I am on very good terms with him, we divide all extra luxuries with one another and often eat with each other. In fact, I have more company than all the quartermasters in the Brigade. Colonel [William] Sargeant, John Sargeant's son, commands our Brigade at this time. He comes in my tent sometimes two and three times a day. He says that he will give me help on my papers. General Meade's wife is his sister, so he has a good deal of influence. I could get a Captain's commission and commissary, but I won't accept anything but get out of service.

It is infernal cold today. I am afraid the river will be frozen before I get started home. I will write to you again in a few days to let you know if I get out. If I do, I will let you know also. No more.

CAMP IN THE FIELD

January 3, 1865

I am very happy to say to you that I am mustered out of service yesterday as my time of service had expired. I shall leave tomorrow for Beltsville if the river is not frozen too hard. So you need not write to me until I get home. I wrote to you on the 1st of January. You will see me if nothing happens next week. No more.

All photographs courtesy of the Library of Congress unless otherwise noted.

The Townsend family papers may be found at <https://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/29485>

